

California State University, San Bernardino

**CSUSB ScholarWorks**

---

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

---

1995

## **An exploration of the latchkey phenomena: Its reasons, victims and options**

Margareth L. Koorn

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project>



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Koorn, Margareth L., "An exploration of the latchkey phenomena: Its reasons, victims and options" (1995). *Theses Digitization Project*. 1062.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/1062>

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@csusb.edu](mailto:scholarworks@csusb.edu).

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE LATCHKEY PHENOMENA:  
ITS REASONS, VICTIMS AND OPTIONS**

---

A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Social Work

---

by  
Margareth L. Koorn

June 1995

AN EXPLORATION OF THE LATCHKEY PHENOMENA:  
ITS REASONS, VICTIMS AND OPTIONS

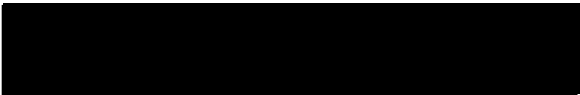

---


A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

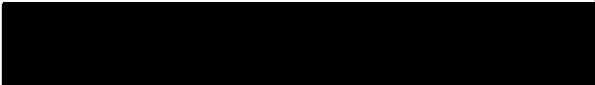
---

by  
Margareth L. Koorn  
June 1995

Approved by:

  
 Dr. Morley Glicken, Project Advisor, Social Work Date June 6, 1995

  
Dr. Teresa Morris, Chair of Research Sequence,  
Social Work

  
Patty Liles, Intern Supervisor at Child Welfare  
Services, San Bernardino

### ABSTRACT

This project uses the constructivist approach to research the phenomena of latchkey children. It looks first at the history of child care in the United States and options for child care used in other industrialized nations. Secondly, unstructured interviews were used to identify the common issues for latchkey children today. The information gathered illustrates the negative physical, psychological and social effects of leaving children without supervision. The informants also indicated that parents feel torn between the legal deterrents of leaving children home alone and lack of appropriate child care resources in their area when they make the choice to leave their children unattended. Finally, child care options are explored that might help parents in this child care bind.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT. . . . .	iii
INTRODUCTION. . . . .	1
LITERATURE REVIEW . . . . .	6
RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH . . . . .	22
RESEARCH . . . . .	25
METHODOLOGY . . . . .	26
THE RESEARCH PROCESS. . . . .	32
Informant #1 . . . . .	32
Informant #2 . . . . .	32
Informant #3 . . . . .	33
Informant #4 . . . . .	34
Informant #5 . . . . .	34
Informant #6 . . . . .	35
VICTOR VALLEY DEMOGRAPHICS. . . . .	37
FINDINGS. . . . .	39
SUMMARY . . . . .	49
CONCLUSION. . . . .	51
APPENDIX 1: STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT. . . . .	55
APPENDIX 2: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT . . . . .	57
BIBLIOGRAPHY. . . . .	59

## INTRODUCTION

In 1974, a study by the U.S. Department of Labor found that 27 million children (42% of all children under the age of 18) had a mother who was either employed or seeking employment. Twenty-five percent of these children were below school age and would require child care. Another study pointed out that out of these mothers who were unemployed, 60% cited the lack of adequate child care as the primary reason for not seeking employment (Wagner, 1976). Women with children find child care a barrier to even become eligible to enter the labor market. In 1994 the U.S. Department of Commerce issued a statistical abstract of the United States in which the number of working mothers and what types of child care arrangements they had, if any, for their children. This abstract stated that in 1993 there were over five million families headed by single working mothers making an average weekly wage of \$307. The abstract also found that in 1991 nearly ten million children under the age of five had a working mother. This number had tripled since 1970 and nearly doubled since 1980. Out of these ten million, only 23% attended organized child-care facilities. This means that over seven million pre-school children were cared for by "other" means (US Dept. of Commerce, 1994).

During the late 1980s, Portland State University conducted a survey of female students with children and found

that a high number dropped out because they could not find satisfactory child care (Thorman, 1989). Those women in the labor market often found it difficult to remain employed. Westinghouse Learning Corporation conducted a study in 1977 of employed women with incomes under \$8,000 who had at least one child under the age of nine, and found that 18% stopped working because they could not afford satisfactory child care (Thorman, 1989).

A survey done during the late 1980s of 1,470 parents employed in a communication company indicated that 39% found it either difficult or very difficult to find child care, particularly if all they needed was before/after school care (Booth, 1992). A national sample of men and women in dual income households with children under the age of 12 revealed that 40% had at least one breakdown in child care arrangements in a three-month period. Twenty-seven percent of the men and 24% of the women reported two to five child care breakdowns during the same time period (Booth, 1992). These figures indicate that child care would be a source of stress for parents. In fact, the United Auto Workers in Toronto conducted a survey of its employees to identify the cause of industrial accidents and found that worry about child care was the single greatest cause of stress among assembly line workers (Thorman, 1989). Portland State University researched the correlation between stress and child care arrangements. The research found that 35% of men and 46% of

women were stressed over their children if they had out of the home child care arrangements, and 30% of men and 50% of women reported stress if they had latchkey children, (left home unattended). Not only were these parents under a great deal of stress, they jeopardized their employment by arriving late or leaving early (Booth, 1992).

In 1990 child care for school-aged children was organized as follows:

Eleven percent attended a child care center, 7% were in a family day-care program, 19% participated in after-school sports or tutoring, 3% had non-relative child care in their own homes and 2% had "other" arrangements. That leaves 58% without any arrangements (Booth, 1992).

A U.S. government survey of over 12 million children under the age of 14 revealed that only 2% were in some form of licensed child care and 8% were left on their own. When reanalyzing these figures and looking at those only for the elementary school-aged children, though, the percentage of those left on their own was an alarming 41.5%! This same survey found that quite a number of "cared for" children were supervised by older siblings who were often kept out of school to care for the younger ones, or elderly, disabled or infirmed relatives. Some children were even drugged to assure ease of care (Wagner, 1976).

Today parents have the responsibility to assure the health and welfare of their children until such time as they

can care for themselves. The age that a child is expected to care for him/herself has increased over the years to today's standard of age 21. But without adequate child care and after school programs, many well-meaning and responsible parents leave children alone for many hours early in the morning and late in the afternoon as they attempt to cycle in work while caring for their children. Some leave children home at night if work requires evening hours. The impact of this is little researched and seldom discussed professionally; probably because so many of us leave our children alone, irrespective of income or status of work. It is just very difficult to find affordable child care for even the more affluent of our citizens.

Nowhere is the latchkey issue more pervasive than in Southern California where parents travel great distances between home and work. This is particularly true of the High Desert area, which is the focus of this research project, where low-cost housing permits families to live more affordably than in the more urban areas, but requires commutes of two hours or longer each way to work. Certainly the psychological impact of such long commutes on top of already tiring work cannot be overlooked in any discussion of the latchkey phenomena. Parents living in the Victor Valley area must also deal with the lack of child care resources in that area as well as the increasing crime rate that might affect their children who are left home alone.



As will be noted in the following literature review, states other than California as well as many countries handle the issue of child care for working parents with great skill, and child welfare advocates would do well to study these established programs and implement the more feasible ones here in Southern California.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Social programs which focused on children date back to the early 1700s. In 1729 there was a private home established in New Orleans for mothers and children who were the survivors of Indian massacres and small pox (Zinn, 1980). In 1735, another visible group of children were targeted for intervention, the abandoned street urchins. Statutes were passed that permitted confiscation of neglected or abandoned children to be "bound out" (Levine, 1992). The children of this period were of little value to society. In fact, they were more of a nuisance because they could not work as hard as adults, required more care, and even with the proper care, only half would live to adulthood (Skolnick, 1992).

During the 1830s, a larger portion of children were recognized as having a need to be supervised. In 1835, the Society for the Relief of Half Orphans and Destitute Children served the child care needs of the poor, working parents. The label "half orphaned" indicated that the children were orphans only when their parents worked (Spodek, 1992). Bernard Greenblatt created a program that protected children from neglect in social welfare day care centers (Kahn, 1987). These day care centers served only the very young because during this time of industrial revolution, children worked along side of adults doing the same back-breaking labor as soon as they were able (Day, 1989; Zinn, 1980).

In 1853, Charles Loring Brace founded the national,

private agency, The Children's Aid Society. Brace studied the "culture of poverty" and helped to develop the fields of Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice. He influenced the beginning of the era of child saving (Day, 1989; Kahn, 1987). The goal of child saving was to protect the children from outsiders while rehabilitating them through discipline and obedience to authority (Day, 1989; Wollons, 1993; Levine, 1992). Some of the children were "saved" by placing them in asylums while the majority were sent West to be saved from perpetual poverty by being taught the Protestant work ethic without the influence of their "immoral" parents. During this crusade to save the children, over 50,000 were taken from their parents and placed with strangers to work without salaries, standards or legal protection (Day, 1989; Wollons, 1993).

During the 1880s there was a social movement called the settlement houses. Hull House was one such settlement house. Although the main reason for establishing these houses was to enculturate new immigrants to America, the workers at Hull House were spending quite a bit of time finding services and goods for widows and deserted women with children. One such service provided was child care for the children (who were too young to work) of working mothers. In 1889 this settlement house started its first kindergarten, then soon added clubs and classes for older children (Trolander, 1975; Addams, 1910).

Child savers like Miriam Van Waters promoted a prolonged childhood, one through adolescence that should be state protected (Wollons, 1993). Sigmund Freud pioneered the "child's world" during the post-civil war period. He supported the fact that children were, indeed, different from adults, and they had special needs (Papalia, 1990; Day, 1989). These child savers believed that children needed protection from abuse, neglect and dependence. The society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was founded by Henry Bergh in 1875, in response to the landmark case of severely abused Mary Ellen, who had to be protected under the sanctions for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Day, 1989; Levine, 1992).

Towards the end of this era the child savers convinced the government, both at the state and federal level, that children needed to be protected because they were the future of the country. The result was the formation of the National Federation of Day Nurseries in 1898. The purpose of this agency was to regulate child care. Also, in 1899, in Illinois, the first juvenile court of law in the nation was established. This court "Regulated the treatment and control of dependent, neglected and delinquent children under the age of 16" (Day, 1989).

In 1909, there was a White House conference that focused on the care of dependent children. It was recognized that large numbers of children were institutionalized be-

cause mothers were forced to work to support their families. From this conference came the first Mother's Pension Law to encourage mothers to stay home because "home life is the highest and finest product of civilization. It is the great molding force of mind and character. [And] children should not be deprived of it except for urgent and compelling reasons (Bremner, 1974)." Later, in 1912, President Howard Taft created the Children's Bureau. Research done by the Children's Bureau found that the mortality rate decreased as the earnings of the head of the household increased, so long as the child was not deprived of a "mother's care" (Bremner, 1974).

To provide a "mother's care" while mothers had to work, public nurseries were established. These first public nursery schools were considered a supplement, not a replacement, for home care (Spodek, 1992). By 1921, the infant mortality rate had been reduced from 124 per 10,000 in 1912 to 76 per 10,000 live births (Bremner, 1974). The child savers of this era focused on the "normal" child and saw public nursery schools as a way of teaching children to conform to society's norms (Wollons, 1993). By 1929, there were 12 industrial day-care programs in the U.S. (Spodek, 1992).

President Herbert Hoover, during the Depression Era, supported the child saving movement. In 1930 he held a conference on Child Health and Protection to discuss the



issues affecting the children during his tenure: education, health, welfare and protection in the light of increasing poverty (Bremner, 1974; Wollons, 1993). To illustrate the decrease in income for families of this time period, between 1929 and 1933 two-thirds of all families realized a reduction of income by at least 20% and half by at least 30%. The average annual income of the working class was between \$500 and \$1,750 (Bremner, 1974).

During the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) promoted child saving through hot lunch programs in public schools and supported local day nurseries. The support of the day nurseries was not as altruistic as it might seem, though, because the focus for the necessity of these nurseries was that they would provide much needed employment for adults first, and day care for children second (Bremner, 1974; Wollons, 1993). By 1938, child labor was outlawed. This put a hardship on working mothers. Not only would they be losing the income of their older children, but now they were also responsible for their child care expenses. In response to this plight, the federal government allowed the Social Security Act to match state funds for mothers with dependent children (Zinn, 1980).

During WWII, the labor force lost 32 million men to the war effort and the War Manpower Commission told women that they must work for the good of the country. In 1942, the War Manpower Commission contacted the Federal Office of

Defense, Health and Welfare Services to coordinate federal assistance to help pay for the necessary child care so the women could enter the labor force full time. Four hundred thousand dollars was quickly transferred from the President's Emergency Fund for federal services and grants. However, there was one stipulation: none of the money was to be used toward the operation costs of child care centers (Bremner, 1974; Day, 1989; Zinn, 1980).

The following year the Lanham Act was approved. It matched local funds to build more day care facilities (Day, 1989). This act was a shift in national policy to societal responsibility for child care (Spodek, 1992). During the funded period, these centers served 100,000 children, and were open 24-hours per day, everyday. They provided an infirmary for the sick and even a meal for tired mothers to take home at a low price. These centers, while doing a wonderful job, were limited; only 10% of the children needing these services actually received them (Spodek, 1992).

The Day Care of Children of Working Mothers Conference, in 1945, addressed this lag in available services. The conference noted that many children were being left home alone or in locked and parked cars while the mothers worked. Some were left with neighbors, grandparents, older siblings or other relatives because there was no other child care available for them (Bremner, 1974). Speakers addressed the fact that although 1.6 million children utilized federally-

funded day care facilities and nursery schools, it was not enough; more should be done, especially for those children under the age of two. Government intervention seemed to have successfully brought down the infant mortality rate by 1945 to 20.7 per 10,000 from a high of 124 per 10,000, and it was argued that increased funding could bring it down even further (Bremner, 1974).

The suggestions of this commission, though, fell on deaf ears because with the war over, there was no longer a need for mothers to work. The request for \$30 million to continue day care assistance was denied. In 1946, the Commission tried again and was granted \$20 million for child care assistance. It was stipulated that the money could not be used to build the much needed new child care facilities (Day, 1989). During the 1950s, scientific research was used to "discourage" mothers from entering the labor force. John Bowlby's research on attachment with orphans reared in institutions after WWII was used, out of context, to note that children receiving care from sources other than their own mother would be gravely emotionally handicapped (Day, 1989; Kahn, 1987; Odon, 1990). Although women supported their men during WWII, the working mothers of the 1950s were stigmatized as "bad" mothers for damaging their children. This stigmatization legitimized the removal of federal funding for child care. Mothers lost everything they had worked so hard to gain over the past decades (Richardson, 1993).

During the 1960s, the government realized that the needs of children were going unmet and, therefore, invested money on child development research, school lunch programs, juvenile delinquency programs and advocated for the expansion of children's rights in the social security system. The 1964 congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act which included funding for Head Start and Job Corps to show the concern it had for the children of the nation (Wollons, 1993).

These changes, though, did not simply evolve out of the stagnation of the 1950s. There was much upheaval. There were 250 legal service organizations (1,800 lawyers) who initiated 25,000 cases per year to shake up the government and public service agencies (Day, 1989). Feminists pressured the government as well, stating that there could be no equal employment until child care was accessible to all (Richardson, 1993). The discovery of the "Battered Child Syndrome" by C. Henry Kempe prompted the Children's Bureau and the Women's Bureau to promote the protection of children at risk through day care programs (Wollons, 1993). There was a study that looked at neglect which found that an appalling 400,000 children under the age of twelve spent several hours daily unsupervised (Bremner, 1974).

During the 1970s there was a stagnation and even a regression in the recognition child care services as compared to the progress of the 1960s. There was some recogni-

tion, though, of the need of child protection during this period. In 1973 the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act was passed. This brought all states up to a minimum level of intervention in abuse cases (Wollons, 1993). Later, Title XX of the Social Security Act mandated protective services, and by 1978 all states had mandated services that complied with both policies (Levine, 1992). It was during this time that the Children's Defense Fund, a private organization, became a voice for abused children.

Child care was still an issue during the 1970s. The federal budget contributed 75% through AFDC to supplement the state's 25% to pay for, license and monitor private and public day care facilities (Day, 1989). The underlying reason for such extravagance was that it was more cost effective to subsidize child care than to pay for foster care for those children removed due to neglect (McGowan, 1983). For those parents who did not qualify for subsidized child care, congress passed a tax deduction for child care services (Spodek, 1992).

During the 1980s the need for child care for the children of working mothers could no longer be ignored. The rising number of female-headed household combined with the reality that families headed by women were more likely to live in poverty, suggested a growing number of families on the welfare rolls. The Women's Political Caucus announced that the increased cost of child care and the decreased



number of child care facilities was forcing growing numbers of mothers to turn to welfare as an alternative to working (Thorman, 1989). The primary objective of child care policy during the 1980s was to maximize the funding for child care to force mothers into the labor force and alleviate any future welfare costs (McGowan, 1983).

The acknowledgement of child care needs initiated a succession of changes at the federal level. The Department of Health, Education and Welfare Day Care Requirements (HEWDCR), formerly the Federal Interagency Day Care Requirements (FIDCR), set minimal standards for federally-funded child care programs. These were eliminated in 1981 when OBRA (Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act) passed and Title XX was turned into the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG). Establishing and maintaining a child care program became complex since these changes stressed decentralization, deregulation and the privatization of child care programs.

Choosing appropriate child care became complex as well. Parents could not rely on government guidelines to assure child care standards because, by 1984, 33 states had lowered child care standards and reduced inspection of service programs. Some states required that a provider merely register and give verbal assurance that they would provide minimum standards. Parents were now in charge of quality control (Kahn, 1987). This was very frustrating for parents because, on one hand the government demanded a high standard

of child care if the mother was working, and this took funding; and on the other hand, the government was forcing women into the labor force without adequate child care available to them, regardless of the cost (Skolnick, 1992).

The confusion and frustration of parents regarding child care was not addressed again until 1990. This was when President Bush signed the Federal Child Care Bill. This was the first substantial federal aid package for child care since the 1950s. It provided \$2.5 billion for new federal child care, block grant funds, provisions to protect children in child care and funds and tax relief to help low income families afford child care (Spodek, 1992).

It took all these changes from the time of our country's founding to recognize and deal with the invisible population of latchkey children. During the 1980s two noted programs evolved out of parental frustration and confusion over having to leave their children home alone. Minnesota developed 19 latchkey programs. These were before/after school, Summer, weekend and holiday child care programs that provided care for children during normal work hours on school grounds. Each of the 19 programs was run by a well-qualified director, a small staff and some part-time personnel.

A second program in Austin, Texas served children up to the sixth grade. This program used 34 elementary school sites to serve students whose parents worked or were in a

job training program. Children participated in physical activities and had tutoring available. Some of the staff was recruited from local colleges. The cost per child was adjusted to the parent's income on a sliding scale (Kahn, 1987; Thorman, 1989).

Presently there is a local program sponsored by the Family Service Association of Western Riverside County that offers child care for the community. This is called the Rubidoux Child Care Center. This facility cares for infants, preschool and school aged children (37 infants, 32 pre-school, 60 school aged). Fees are based on type and hours of care and can be subsidized for eligible families. The staff is highly qualified in early childhood development and their continuing education is encouraged (Betro, 1995).

When researching child care programs at the international level, one notices that most countries struggle with the issues of child care in much the same way that we do in the U.S. For example, Japan, which did not address child care issues until 1944, has two types of child care that are regulated by the government: Public centers that are funded by the regional government and municipalities, and Industry sponsored programs. The public centers charge parents fees according to income. The Ministry of Health and Welfare requires that the staff and teachers have at least a four-year degree and that their assistants have two years of college education. The child to staff ratio specified by

the Ministry is 1 to 6 for children under the age of two, 1 to 20 for those age three and 1 to 30 for those over the age of four. The second type of program was put into effect to fill in the gaps of service for the children on waiting lists. These centers receive no government funding, but are responsible for the same standards as the public centers. There are occasions, though, that the local government will partially fund the construction of these centers (Thorman, 1989).

France is another country that addresses child care in ways different from the U.S. These also differ from those in Japan in that participation in each program depends on the age of the child, not the employment status of the parent. Child care is free to all parents and is government funded. The first child care experience for a French child is in a creche (French for cradle). This is a neighborhood-based, government regulated program that serves children between the ages of six weeks and three years. The emphasis is on physical care, health and safety of children. All staff are required to have completed two years of college education. The staff to child ratio is 1 to 6. From ages three to six, children attend école maternelles, where the emphasis is on social and cognitive development. These are usually located near or on school grounds (Thorman, 1989).

Finland has a child care program that is not under government control. The earliest form of child care in

Finland dates back to 1883 but was not available to working parents until the 1950s and 1960s. The staff of these facilities are required to have at least one year of specialty training before employment. The majority of the cost of child care in this country is carried by the municipality, with the state paying one-third and the parents paying the cost of the child's food (Thorman, 1989).

Child care centers in Sweden are regulated by the National Board of Health and Welfare. All children in the country are eligible, but priority placement is given to those of unmarried parents. The purpose of each program is to promote a child's personal development and social adjustments. There is a high staff to child ratio that differs according to the age of the child. Nursery school teachers are required to study at a state college for two years, and children's nurses must complete a one-term course plus a 34-week practicum. All child care instructors are expected to have three years of specialty training. The cost of child care is split: one-fourth state and three-fourths municipality with the parents paying whatever they can afford, depending on income (Thorman, 1989).

Other countries have institutionalized child care programs that have operated successfully for many years. It should be noted that the most successful ones have put the welfare of the child above that of the parent and beyond dollar value. Attention in those countries is paid to the



quality of care, regardless of the cost.

Sheila Kamerman, the author of Parenting in an Unresponsive Society (1980), testified before a congressional committee about the need for institutional child care services for children at least through the age of nine. She pointed out that significant numbers of children under the age of nine are left to care for themselves. She explained that this situation was highly correlated with increased incidents of household accidents, over exposure to television, improper nutrition, obesity and exposure to drugs. She offered school centered child care before and after school as a positive alternative for these children (Thorman, 1989).

This need was noticed earlier, during the 1950s, by Norton W. Grubb and Marvin Lazerson when they conducted a case study of California children's centers. They found that sixty percent of the families served were single-parent, female-headed households. The study attempted to support the need for all-day care centers for pre-school children and after school care for elementary school children (Kahn, 1987). Given the current growth rate, demographers project that the population of children under the age of six will be 22.5 million and 30.6 million between the ages of six and thirteen, by 1995. If those figures are combined with the fact that presently two out of every three children under the age of six and three out of every four

children between the ages of six and thirteen have a working mother, then about 38 million children will need some form of child care in 1995 (Booth, 1992).

Presently California is at the forefront of government intervention in child care services. When the gaps in service are recognized, the state takes action. The first grants for child care assistance were made in 1986, after a compromise between Democratic legislators and the Republican governor to link "extended day care services" to the work-training program, GAIN. Later, in October of 1990, both federal and state legislation passed assist to low- and moderate-income working families with child care by increasing the supply as well as the quality of child care programs (Booth, 1992).

### RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH

The availability and affordability of child care services greatly influences the latchkey phenomena. Children who have these services do not go home alone, and they are supervised until their parents come home. When we look at our history, we see that there was never enough child care services, affordable or otherwise, and parents were forced to take extreme measures to supplement those services so they could work and provide for the family unit. These measures include locking their children in parked cars, keeping older children out of school to watch the younger ones, and even drugging their children to ensure they slept through the night while the parents worked. These parents risked, as are many parents today, legal penalties because they had no access to adult supervised care for their children.

There is very little research on the effects of the latchkey phenomena on children. But if we look at the environment of the U.S. in the 1990s, we can predict a poor prognosis for the emotional and physical health of the next generation. Our children are growing up in a world of instant gratification. Everything around them tells them that they should have the best and that they should have it now. They get that message from parents who must both work to bring the material needs into the home that society dictates are right.

They interface with computers and video games. They eat microwaved meals out of throw-away cardboard boxes. They have few friends because they cannot leave the safety of their home with its burglar alarms and window bars. Even if they did go outside, they would not stay long, because there is an increase in gang activity in neighborhoods and an increase in violent crime. There is little opportunity for physical activity because funding for school based and community based programs are constantly being cut, so the child entertains him-herself with talk shows that talk about how simple it is to make a bomb from household items. They explore the internet system and find a curiosity called CyborSex, and play this new game. They go through their parents' bathroom cabinets and find some pretty pills that help their parents to relax at night and have enough energy to face the day in the morning. They wonder what one or two taste like and try some...they want to be just like their parents. They are lonely and cannot wait to grow up and have children, and they promised themselves that their children will never, never feel abandoned like they do right now.

Children are the most important resource of the human race. The fact that we, in this progressive country, have latchkey children shows how little value is placed on this resource. When parents leave their children home alone they must deal with several issues. They must worry about the

safety of their children. They should be concerned about the sources of socialization that their children have access to. They wonder about the future emotional and physical health of their children. And they fear legal consequences for leaving the children unsupervised. Parents have financial reasons for not using available services, but some children are left home because there are no services available at any cost. This research project will explore some of these issues.

## THE RESEARCH

While the problem parents experience in child care is universal, the latchkey phenomena is unique to each community where it is found. The predisposing factors as well as the available resources surrounding this issue will differ from community to community. Consequently, it was felt that a constructivist paradigm would be the best fit when analyzing this social issue.

The goal of the researcher is to gather and share information and perhaps set the stage for future networking, not to plan a social action or a political statement, nor is it biased by any specific ideology, as required by the critical paradigm. Rather it is open to all points of view. Although this project is not critically based, the researcher can foresee this project as the basis for a future critical research project that would give a voice to the latchkey children and their families. It is not unusual for constructivist research projects to precede a social action, according to Erlandson (1993).



## METHODOLOGY

Before data collection began, six key informants were chosen. They were a convenience sample of people who, in the researcher's opinion, would have very differing opinions about the latchkey phenomena. The demographic information and description of each informant are discussed as the informant information is identified in the next section.

In the course of the research process, six key informants explored the reasons for and the consequences of the latchkey phenomena from their unique point of view. The researcher shared these points of view with the other informants and encouraged them to incorporate this new information into their point of view of the issues discussed. The informants also had the opportunity to discuss what they felt could be done to help latchkey children. As this information was shared, possible barriers to these options were discussed.

This research project proceeded through three successive phases of inquiry. Phase one was the orientation and overview, and was accomplished during the first meeting with the informant. During this phase, the researcher prepared the informant for the type of research being done. It began with a description of what constructivist research was and a discussion of the goals of this project. Informants were told that their names would be held confidential, but that the information given to the researcher regarding their

viewpoints would be shared among the other participants.

The informants were given a choice of whether or not to have the interview audio taped. The researcher explained that a taped interview would lend the highest degree of accuracy to the data. The researcher assured the informants that if the interview was taped, the tape would be erased after the interview had been transcribed and the written information approved by them. The researcher then went over the Statement of Informed Consent form (Appendix 1), and the informant signed it.

During phase two, the focused exploration, data collection began. This phase occurred in the first interview. The data was collected in an unstructured interview. The researcher began each interview with the informant's definition of latchkey child. From that point on the interview flowed to cover the following issues: (1) What age does a child need some form of child care while the parent(s) is away from the home? The literature on this issue is vague. Throughout history children were left home alone or caring for others when they were mature enough to do so. Even though there are laws today that protect children from neglect and abandonment, law enforcement and CPS arbitrarily enforce them depending on the age of the child and the context in which he/she is left alone. (2) What safety hazards should parents worry about and how can they avoid them? The literature reflects that children who are unsu-

pervised have an increased risk for accidents, but there are no specific accidents mentioned. Given the social environment of the 1990s, parents not only worry about the child experimenting with household items and appliances in the home and having an accident, parents also worry if the child will get hurt coming home from school. There could also be the concern of a child's reaction in case of an emergency, and this could be dependent on the child's age and level of maturity. (3) How does the financial situation of the parent(s) influence whether or not the family has access to child care? Since the first child care programs were put into place, the cost of care made it inaccessible to many families, and the government would have to help those families. In the present time, when the cost of living is so high and the regulations for child care providers are so stringent, the working poor have barely enough to survive, and cannot hope to afford the outrageous cost of child care. (4) What legal deterrents are there from leaving a child unsupervised? There are some deterrents, but they are not consistently enforced, and therefore, parents take the risk of leaving their children home. The literature shows that child savers have historically tried to protect children from abuse and neglect, but their intervention was not always in the best interest of the child or the family. (5) What are the sources of socialization available to latchkey children? The literature addresses child care

centers as a place where society could socialize children to respect authority and learn that work was good, but it did not address the socialization of a child home alone. The child home alone gets his/her socialization from their environment, be it electronic or human. Parents can only have control over the socialization that they expose their children to when they are home. (6) What are the possible psychological side effects of abandoning a child several hours a day? The literature addresses attachment problems for children raised away from their mother's, but it does not talk about the effects of "aloneness" on children. Given the social environment of today, one would imagine that children left alone would be much more fearful of strangers and crime. One would also presume that children left without human contact and who were fearful would need comfort, but could trust no one to comfort them, and therefore, they would have relationship problems later in life. These children would normalize being alone and might create functional and dysfunctional coping strategies for their situation. (7) What are some unique issues for latchkey children in the Victor Valley area? This area has some unique qualities that will be addressed later that lead to a special set of circumstances for the families that live there.

These areas were brought out in each interview through open ended questions. Associated information was shared and

discussed during this second phase of inquiry.

Immediately after each interview, the researcher analyzed the data collected. Several days later, the informant was presented with their paraphrased description of the latchkey phenomena. The informant was allowed to go over the information and make any changes necessary. When the information was approved, the researcher progressed to the next key informant. The information gathered from each informant was shared with each successive subject until each of the six informants had a chance to comment on the issue.

The continual analysis of the data between interviews allowed the researcher to identify themes surrounding the latchkey phenomena. These themes helped to focus successive interviews as well as assist the researcher when coding the data.

The third phase of this project was the member check of the data. The researcher allowed for two separate reviews of data by the respondents to ensure accuracy of the data. The first review was in the short face to face meeting with each informant for approval of the information gathered. The second review occurred after all the interviews were complete. At that time each informant reviewed and was allowed to revise their initial statement after they had a chance to reflect on the other perspectives of all of the informants.

During the final interview, the researcher debriefed

each participant with a written statement as well as a closing interview which encouraged the participant to explore any discomfort about the topic. (See Appendix 2)



## THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The following is a description of the six informants in the order that they were interviewed.

### Informant #1

The first informant was a child care specialist at a social service agency. She grew up during the 60s and felt that it was good for mothers to work and support their children. She raised her children as a single parent and found it necessary to leave them home alone at times. She had a good social network as she was raising her children and often made arrangements with other parents to get the neighborhood children to and from after school activities. She expressed some guilt over leaving her children home alone because she remembered how she felt lonely and abandoned as a latchkey child. As the child care specialist in her office, she hears the frustration of parents of school aged children in the high desert area over its lack of resources. She has a four-year college degree and was very articulate on this topic.

### Informant #2

The second informant was a social service practitioner, at a social service agency. He was a candidate for his doctorate degree in psychology, and has a long work history with Child Protective Services. He is presently married and has two children, one in school and one in child care. The school aged child does come home on his own and is alone for

a few hours per day. This informant grew up during the 40s as the youngest of three sons of a widow. He shared that he was a latchkey child from the age of three to fifteen while his mother worked factory and waitress jobs. This man remembered a time when he was five-years old when his mother, an orphan herself, contemplated sending him and his brothers to an orphanage because the burden of raising the boys was too much for her to bare. He spoke of how torn she felt when she interviewed a perspective orphanage. He also noted his relief when she held him and promised to keep the family together, even though she would have to work very hard and probably see very little of her sons. At the end of our initial interview, he said:

"Children are born and they move out. For those parents who have latchkey children, the interim is spent worrying and their energy is not used to enjoy their children's development, and time goes by too fast. They have no time to pause and play."

### Informant #3

The third informant was a political representative in the Victor Valley area. She was brought up during the 50s by a single parent. She expressed concern over the degeneration of family values today. She also noted that she raised her child as a single parent, and had at times left her home alone. She left her home alone rarely, making specific after-school plans for her daughter to ensure that she would not have to be alone. At the end of our interview, she shared that she too had grown up as a latchkey

child. She was the oldest of three and was regularly left to care for her younger siblings.

#### Informant #4

The fourth informant was a child care specialist for a county social service agency. He had been in this position for less than one year. He had a four-year degree in anthropology. He had strong background in psychology as his past employment included several years in mental health facilities. He was brought up during the 50s and had a strong belief that traditional family was best for raising a child. As he grew up, his mother stayed home while his father worked full-time. He was a single man, never married, and has no children. He told the researcher that employment of women created the dual income family, which in turn led to the destruction of the family unit. He also said that the destruction of the family unit, the basic unit of society, would ultimately lead to the disintegration of our society.

#### Informant #5

The fifth informant was a student. She had a four-year degree in psychology and had several years of experience in the mental health field. She was Latina and raised during the 50s as a latchkey child. She raised her three children as a single parent during the 70s. She shared her bad experiences with child care that led to her choice to leave her children home alone while she worked and went to school.

She recalled a time when her son, then very young, was beaten with a razor strap by his child care provider for punishment. She also remembered that this same provider made her children sleep in a room without heat and would not allow the children to eat the meals she had packed for them. These experiences led her to trust no one but family members to care for her children. She also stated to the researcher that in the past she had organized and implemented a program for homeless children in the shelter where she worked. This program linked the elders of the area with the children of the shelter. The elderly were encouraged to do activities with these children. She shared that this program was so stimulating for the elders that they put together a Christmas program for the children of the shelter.

#### Informant #6

The sixth, and final, informant was a married housewife and mother of one. She grew up in the South during the 50s. Her father was a "gentleman farmer" and her mother worked odd jobs. Her grandmother lived in the home with her family and they provided child care until she died. She was an adolescent when this happened. She shared that her adolescence was a lonely time, because she felt abandoned. She has a graduate degree in psychology which she worked on for many years while her daughter was in school. She has seldom worked outside of the home feeling it was the duty of a wife to take care of home and hearth. She indicated that she

felt that the housewife has lost credibility in this day and age of dual income families and that children are suffering.

She shared this story with the researcher:

"Raising a child is like teaching them to swim. Each parent has their own way of doing it. Some parents are like me. They get in the pool with their child and support them until they can float and feel safe when the parent's hands are no longer underneath them. Those parents want to make sure that the child does not drown then nor in the future. Other parents push their child into the deep end and watch to see if they come up. If the child does not come up in a while, the parent goes in after them and lets them try again. Then there are the parents who throw their child into the middle of the pool and walk away before they know if their child has even come up, not caring whether they do or not. The latter parents take a great risk. They hope that their child will struggle on their own to the surface and come out of the pool feeling proud of themselves. But they risk that the child might make it out of the pool but he/she refuses to ever jump in the pool again, out of fear. They also risk the death of their child. The latchkey child has parents similar in attitude to the latter two parents."

### VICTOR VALLEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Because the issues pertaining to the Victor Valley area will be addressed by the informants in this research, the demographics of the area will be important when considering their responses. The following information comes from a 1993 survey sponsored by the Desert Communities United Way. The household income for 80% of the residents in the area was \$50,000 or below and 26% had an annual income of \$15,000. The ethnic breakdown of the area is: 73.6 Anglo, 12.8% Latino, 4% African American, 2% Native American, 1.6% Asian American and 6% other. The top eight issues that effect the Victor Valley residents are: Poverty, crime, drug abuse, unaffordable housing, inadequate public transportation, a shortage of recreation facilities, gang activity and lack of AIDS awareness, in that order.

One of the informants compared the living conditions in some of the more remote areas of the Victor Valley area to the areas of Appalachia or the impoverished Native American reservations in South Dakota, places he had worked in in the past. Another described the awareness of neighbors for each other as similar to that of neighbors in the cities during the 1950s. The researcher has seen families living in sub-standard conditions, in travel trailers or broken down cars, without utilities or access to sanitary toilet facilities. She has seen case managers refuse to take on these families because they were "doing okay" and there were "no services



to offer them anyway."

## FINDINGS

Even though each informant came from very different backgrounds and had different life experiences, there were several areas of agreement about the definition of a latchkey child. A latchkey child is a child, usually of school age, who is left alone for several hours a day while parents work or go to school. Latchkey children are usually from single parent families, but could be from dual parent families if they both work. One informant brought out that the age of the child could go below school age, if older siblings were caring for the child. Other informants added that these families were usually low income and that the parent worked for the survival of the family.

In the interview, the age of a child requiring adult supervision was addressed next. Each of the informants agreed that from birth to age ten, all children should have some form of adult supervision at all times. Two informants thought this age should be extended to age 13 and one thought 17 was better. Of those who did not think supervision was necessary up to age 17, four thought that leaving the child unattended for periods of time would depend on the maturity level of the child, and one thought that should be extended to age 18.

All of the informants agreed that the age of the child did not guarantee maturity because some children are mature at an early age and some children never achieve maturity.

They also agreed that the degree of parental comfort with leaving a child at home alone increased with age. The respondents, who were also parents, added that safety issues affected younger children while peer pressure affected older children. One informant, the one without children, stated that the intensity of supervision of children should decrease with the age of the child, but that they should have some sort of supervision until emancipation. One informant stated that after the age of twelve, a child could be left in charge of younger children as long as there was regular parental contact. There was a warning by two of the informants that children left in charge of younger ones could become parentified and resentful of responsibility later in life. All of the informants agreed that it was difficult to accept that preschool children were ever left unattended, but they did realize that it was not so uncommon.

The informants all stated that there were legal issues in leaving children home alone that parents violated. The most common worry for parents was the involvement of law enforcement or Child Protective Services (CPS) because the child was left unsupervised. The two informants with a CPS background named Penal Code 271 as the means for law enforcement involvement. This code states that parents of children under the age of 14 may not desert the child in any place with the intention of abandoning the child. These two informants also named the Welfare and Institutions Code 300

(b) as the means for CPS involvement. This code states that if a minor suffers or is likely to suffer physical harm or illness because the parent or guardian neglects to protect the minor, the minor can and will be taken into custody as long as it is necessary to protect the minor.

The two child care specialists stated that these codes are arbitrarily acted upon and action depended on the age of the child left alone. One informant stated that these legal deterrents were not strong enough to keep her from leaving her children home alone, but they were strong enough for her to not allow her children to leave the home when she was not there.

During the interviews, there was also a discussion about the financial issues that influence families to choose to leave their children home alone. Each of the informants agreed that when a family's survival needs were not being met, the luxury of child care is unaffordable. One informant stated that child care, even by friends and family, is not free; one must pay in time or money. The single mothers stated that the money made by working is so necessary for survival that it is worth the risk of leaving their children home alone. Two of the informants noted that in a dual-parent family, both parents should not have to work, but that they are driven by the cost of living and to work to attain material goods as well as to pay the cost of the health and welfare of their children.

The child care specialists shared that there are state and federal funds available for child care, but many families are either unaware of it, don't know how to access it, or don't qualify for the funding.

When safety issues for latchkey children were discussed, there were a variety of responses from the informants. They agreed that the kind of safety issues that latchkey children faced were dependent upon the age of the child and whether or not the child was home alone or left with siblings. Two of the informants stated that victimization by strangers was as much a worry for parents of young children as household accidents. Parents are responsible for the safety of their children. The informants agreed that this anxiety is the concern over an overlooked hazard in the home. Several stated that worry over the safety of a child decreases as they get older because the judgment of a young child in case of an emergency is poor, at best. They also reported that younger children tended to explore the home and were more prone to experiment with dangerous things, like the stove or the fireplace, and get hurt. Safety issues, one informant said, "don't disappear with age, they simply change."

As the child ages, peer pressure becomes a worry for the parents. All of the informants agreed that peer pressure, when children are left unsupervised, could lead to experimentation with drugs and sex. In that respect, one

informant noted that she was more concerned with both issues for her daughters than her son.

These safety issues seem to stem from the parents' fear of the legal intervention as much as the concern over their children. Several of the informants stated that the safety issues could be overcome if there was regular parental contact or if there was a network of neighbors nearby for the children to contact in case of an emergency. Two of the informants also noted that the safety risks were decreased when there was more than one child in the home.

The informants all expressed great concern over the socialization of latchkey children. Some of the informants felt that if the parents could not be with the child to socialize him/her, then it is left up to the community to take on this responsibility in much the same way as it occurs in primitive, agrarian type communities. Other respondents countered this opinion by stating that this sense of social responsibility is not possible in our society because we have become a community of strangers whereas in primitive communities, they were a community of families. It is now up to the family to survive or disintegrate...a form of social Darwinism. Two of the respondents blamed the welfare system for allowing incompetent families to exist at the cost of the greater society by allowing their dysfunction to propagate. Several informants agreed that parents have children today without thinking about the financial



consideration because there is a welfare safety net to limit poverty.

The informants were also concerned about the influences that socialized latchkey children. Several mentioned the media in its degenerative state. One even pointed out that prime time afternoon talk shows were discussing incest and inappropriate sexual behavior while children watched unmonitored and without a basis of comparison. The influence of peers was another concern of several of the informants. One informant said that in the absence of adult supervision to set limits, there was a chance that adolescents would turn to gangs to set limits for them. He also stated that children in gangs were all so starved for attention that they acted out to get the attention so craved by adults. Several informants stated that when moral values deteriorate from those of the absent parent, it is because punishment for anti-social and amoral behavior is inconsistent.

Society stigmatizes those parents who choose to stay home and raise their children. Two informants shared that men who stay home are referred to as "wimps" or "slouches" by their peers. Women who stay home are considered lazy and unable to live up to their potential. To avoid the stigma of being a stay-at-home parent, parents work or go to school, leaving the child isolated. Several informants stated that the social interaction that leads to healthy development is absent when the child is isolated in the

home. The risk for this to occur is less likely for those latchkey children who are left in sibling groups, but they still lag in social skills as compared to their "cared-for" counterparts, according to one informant. One informant said that to strengthen the family unit parents would have to go against prevailing social norms and sacrifice material gain in order to raise healthy children, healthy both physically and emotionally.

The psychological effects of the latchkey phenomena on children and, later, as they grow to adulthood, were also addressed. The primary statement made by each of the informants was that these children feel lonely and abandoned and that such feelings were carried on throughout their lives. Three of the respondents said that latchkey children are more likely than their "cared-for" counterparts to develop dysfunctional coping mechanisms when they spend so much time alone and that these could develop into dysfunctional life patterns. Latchkey children often create a fantasy world that they escape into or turn to drugs and alcohol to help them escape their loneliness. Several informants noted that since latchkey children are deprived of human contact at home, they would react in several ways which could be witnessed in other settings, such as school. One way they could react was to withdraw from touch and intimacy because aloneness was normalized. They could also react by acting out to get desired attention. They might be disruptive in

class and act out in the home. These children are targeted by teachers as trouble makers and under achievers and, in the home, they are potentially at-risk of physical abuse from stressed parents. One informant pointed out that, per Eric Erikson, children who don't get attention and nurturance seek to have these needs met in adulthood. "What you don't receive in childhood, you act out with significant others until that need is met."

A few of the informants stated their concerns over the effects of being an older sibling in charge of younger children while the parent was away. One stated that parents label these children as more responsible, but in reality, they are often more stressed. The two informants who grew up in a multi-child latchkey situation indicated that the older sibling grew up to resent responsibility. There was also the concern that these children would be overprotective parents or would become involved in a co-dependent relationship.

One other concern that several informants expressed was the fear that children feel when left alone. Although children have a natural fear of strangers, this fear is heightened in latchkey children by parents who worry that their child will be victimized. These children could later develop trust issues or withdraw from social interaction.

The informants echoed many of the issues presented by the United Way in its needs assessment of the Victor Valley

area. All the informants agreed that the lack of conventional neighborhoods left families physically distant from one another and more at risk in case of an emergency. One respondent went a little further by stating that the "spreadoutness" of the area often creates a delay in arrival of emergency services. They also agreed that services for children and families were few, in some areas, and nonexistent in others. There is an unreliable public transportation system that cannot be counted on to get children to after school activities. Several informants mentioned that licensed child care providers were limited in the area and those that did practice did not take school aged children because state regulations limited them to six children. They accepted pre-school, full-time children for financial reasons.

Most of the informants said that the high population of low and no-income families and the high transient population made it difficult to establish a reliable child care network. Two of the informants shared their concerns that the isolation of many homes in the area left those children in them more vulnerable to victimization and few chances for healthy socialization. Several of the informants noted that since many parents who work commute "down the hill" and into the cities, there was a greater sense of worry about their children, particularly in the case of earthquakes or other natural disasters.

The final part of each interview was a discussion of options for the families with latchkey children. All of the respondents said that a school-based program would be most convenient for these children because there was a lack of adequate transportation in the area. There was the suggestion that some of the elderly population of the area might be hired to care for the children since this interaction would benefit all involved. There was also a suggestion by several informants to expand the existing community programs into the other areas of the Victor Valley. All of the respondents agreed that there should be some cost to the parents of the children served. Two of the informants stated that if there were government programs available that all the residents should have access to it, regardless of income.

### SUMMARY

The latchkey phenomena exists because there is a lack of affordable child care services in our society. There are many definitions of what a latchkey child is, but there was a consensus among the informants that the latchkey child is usually of school age and is left home alone for several hours while the parent(s) works or goes to school. There was also agreement among the informants that parents seldom leave their children home alone by choice, but rather they are forced to do so because child care is either unavailable, too costly or risky.

When a parent leaves a child home alone, either by choice or out of necessity there are several issues that arise from that decision. The informants addressed a variety of these issues. They discussed safety issues that stemmed from home hazards that parents neglected to secure and behavior hazardous to the child if they were exposed to amoral peer pressure. The informants also spoke about negative long-term psychological effects of leaving children alone, like substance abuse problems and trust issues that could lead to poor future relationships. Different means of socialization were also addressed by the informants, like the media and peers, both of which the parents have little control over when they are not home. Finally the informants discussed the legal statutes that deterred parents from leaving children home alone and the financial situations of

many parents that leave them no choice but to abandon them to self-care for several hours daily.



### CONCLUSION

The goal of this researcher was not to identify all the issues that latchkey children have nor was the goal to give the ultimate definition of a latchkey child. This researcher helped six informants to identify the issues that were important to them. By doing this project, the researcher found that many of the points of view were very much alike, even though the researcher tried to get informants with different perspectives of the phenomena.

If the latchkey phenomena is as pervasive in our society as the data indicates and if the negative impact of this phenomena on children is as severe as these six informants indicated, then professionals in social service settings must be compelled to study this phenomena further and take social action to prevent future psychological, physical and social damage to up-and-coming generations.

The number of latchkey children in the United States can only be estimated, but is known to be in the tens of millions. Parents are reluctant to help get an accurate number because they fear legal ramifications to leaving their children unsupervised. Parents leave their children home alone for different reasons, but the most common is the high cost of child care. When parents must choose between the family's financial survival and the supervision of one or two children, child care is sacrificed. Children of all ages can become latchkey children, but the likelihood that

parents would consider self-care as opposed to organized day care increases with the age of the child. The age of the child also affects what a parent worries most about while the child is at home alone. Parents of younger children worry more about the safety of their children whereas those with older ones, worry more about the sources of socialization they are exposed to.

In our country we place monetary value on everything. When examining the options for child care in other countries, one sees that the health and welfare of the child does not have monetary value. Children need nurturance from their parents, and if that is impossible, from a parent substitute. Parents need more options to secure the care of their children. The lack of child care services in some areas and the cost of services for low income families leave only the option of leaving children unsupervised. Given a choice, most parents would choose to have their children in some type of organized care. Historically one can see that this is the case. Over one hundred years ago during the settlement house movement, the child care programs for children of all ages were filled to overflowing. Those child care workers offered children food, comfort and stimulating activities while their parents worked. It was again illustrated in the 1940s when public child care centers were opened for those mothers working for the war effort. These centers were filled to capacity and the labor force request-

ed an expansion of those programs because all the children were not being served.

Today we have children staying home alone or waiting in cars while their parents work or go to school because child care services are unavailable or unattainable. Now, during this time of government cut-backs and welfare reform, social work professionals must be creative to meet the child care needs of these latchkey children and their families.

Some of the options discussed by the informants would be feasible alternatives to standard child care centers. One option would be to organize neighborhood parent co-ops where parents care for each other's children by providing supervision and transportation and to share the burden of child care. Two more options discussed were community or school based programs for child care. These programs could be run on donations from the private sector and some government grants. A small paid staff could organize a child care staff of volunteer parents, students interning for child development credentials and retired residents of the community who want to work with children. Some of the parent volunteers could be on welfare with young children, earning their cash aid. Parents could pay for these services on a sliding scale and with their services to keep the center running.

These type of programs would be a challenge for community organizers nationwide. This researcher feels it would

be a challenge because our society does not want to see the latchkey phenomena as a social problem and many communities might not be willing to work on a solution.

## APPENDIX 1

### Statement of Informed Consent

The study in which you are about to participate uses the interview approach to understanding the Latchkey phenomena.

This study is being conducted by Margaret Koorn under the supervision of Dr. Morley Glicken, Professor of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino. The study has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee of the Department of Social Work which is a sub-committee of the Institutional Review Board of California State University, San Bernardino.

In this study you will be one of several key people interviewed about your perception of the Child Care Issues for Latchkey Children. You will participate in an initial interview that will last approximately one hour. This interview will be audio taped, with your approval. The taped interview will be kept by the researcher until it has been transcribed and the written version approved by you. After your review of the tape, it will be erased. There is a possibility that the researcher will contact you several times by phone to clarify your statements.

Before the research project is finalized, the researcher will conduct a follow-up interview which will last approximately one hour. During this interview, the researcher

will share the data collected from you and the other key participants. The researcher will also set aside some time during this interview for you to ask any questions about the project or the findings which may seem relevant to you.

Because of the nature of this research approach, the information you will provide will not be completely confidential or anonymous and your ideas will be shared with other study participants without giving your name. However, other participants might recognize your ideas and be able to identify their source.

At the conclusion of this project, you may request a copy of the final results by writing:

Dr. Morley Glicken  
CSUSB/Dept. of Social Work  
5500 University Parkway  
San Bernardino, Ca. 92407

Please understand that your participation in this research project is totally voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time during this project without penalty, and to remove your input at anytime during this project.

I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate.

I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX 2

### Debriefing Statement

You have just participated in a Research Project to help clarify the Child Care Issues for families with Latch-key children.

Many professionals are concerned about the needs of Latchkey children, particularly in the area of safety, and whether children grow normally when parents are away a great deal. With your help, the researcher has examined these issues and has found some useful information, which she would be pleased to share with you.

The researcher understands that for some participants, the discussion of latchkey children might be personally sensitive, therefore she has listed below two numbers for you to call should you have concerns or questions about the subject matter: Latchkey Children.

National Council on Child  
Abuse and Family Violence  
(800) 222-2000

Child Protective Services  
(909) 387-6200 (SBCo)  
(619) 243-8833 (High Desert)

For further information about the findings, an abstract will be available after June 18, 1995. You may receive the abstract and ask any additional questions regarding the



findings by calling:

Dr. Morley Glicken

(909) 880-5557

Project Advisor

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Addams, Jane. (1910). Twenty Years at Hull-house. New York The MacMillan Company.
- Booth, Alan. (1992). Child Care in the 1990s: Trends and Consequences. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Bremner, Robert H. (Advertising Editor). (1974). Children and Youth: Social Problems and Social Policy. New York: Arno Press.
- Coolsen, Peter. (1987). When School's Out and Nobody's Home. Chicago Ill.: National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse.
- Day, Phyllis J. (1989). A New History of Social Welfare. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Durbin, E. (1990). Funding for Child Care Training: A Federal Yellow Pages. Washington D.C.: Child Welfare League of America, Inc.
- Erlandson, David A. et.al. (1993). Doing Naturalistic Inquiry. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Jansson, Bruce S. (1984). Theory and Practice of Social Welfare Policy. California Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Kahn, Alfred J. and Kamerman, Sheila B. (1987). Child Care: Facing the Hard Choices. Massachusetts: Auburn House Publishing Company.
- Levine, Murray and Levine, Adeline. (1992). Helping Children A Social History. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McGowan, Brenda G. and Meezan, William. (1983). Child Welfare: Current Dilemmas, Future Directions. Itasca: F.E. Peacock Publishers, Inc.
- Newman, Sally. (1989). A History of Intergenerational Programs. New York, NY.: Haworth Press, Inc.
- Odon, Guy R. (1993). Women, Motherhood, and Childrearing. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Papalia, Diane E. and Olds, Sally Wendkos. (1990). A Child's World. 5th Ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

- Pence, Alan R. (1987). "Child Care's Family Tree: Toward A History of the Child and Youth Care Profession in North America." Child & Youth Care Quarterly. 16 (3), Fall 1987. pp. 151-161.
- Richardson, Diane. (1993). Women, Motherhood, and Child-rearing. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Rodwell, Mary K. (1987). "Naturalistic Inquiry: An Alternative Model for Social Work Assessment." Social Service Review. Vol. 61. June 1987. pp. 231-246.
- Skolnick, Arlene S. (1992). The Intimate Environment. 5th ed. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc.
- Spodek, Bernard and Saracho, Olivia N. (1992). Issues in Child Care. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Strauss, Anselm and Corbin, Juliet. (1990). Basics of Qualitative Research. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Thorman, George. (1989). Day Care: An Emerging Crisis. Illinois: Charles C. Thomas.
- Trolander, Judith Ann. (1975). Settlement Houses and the Great Depression. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- U.S. Department of Commerce. (1994). Statistical Abstract of the United States. (114th ed.) Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce.
- Wagner, Marsden and Wagner, Mary. (1976). The Danish National Child Care System: A Successful System as Model for the Reconstruction of American Child Care. Colorado: Westview Press.
- Wollons, Roberta (Editor). (1993). Children At Risk In America: History, Concepts, and Public Policy. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Zinn, Howard. (1980). A People's History of the United States. New York: Harper Perennial.